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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the pilot phase of the implementation of Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) in the Effective Practice schools of the Boston Public Schools. The report begins with a review of the challenges that content/literacy, whole-school change, and mathematics coaches encountered in the pilot implementation, including those of professional development. It then examines the organization and focus of the CCL and the implications of this coaching model for addressing the challenges previously elaborated. Coaching and coaching-related issues that need to be addressed in designing a scale-up of the CCL model in literacy are outlined. Other aspects of coaching are described, along with its integral role in improving teaching and learning. Much of what remains to be developed relates to the raining and supervision of CCL coaches and the infrastructure that will be required for roll-out on a larger scale. The report reiterates the conclusion of previous studies: CCL will not work without effective principal leadership. (SLD)

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Using What We Know:
Implications for Scaling-Up Implementation of the CCL Model

January 28, 2002

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Using What We Know:
Implications for Scaling-Up Implementation of the CCL Model

During the 2000-2001 school year, Education Matters researchers interviewed 24 content/literacy coaches, and 17 whole-school change coaches from cohorts I-IV[1]. Our purpose was to provide an update on the ways in which coaches were supporting implementation of the Essentials and the factors that led them to be more and less successful with critical components of the district's whole-school improvement effort. In June 2001, at the request of the BPE, we submitted a memo to the BPE that focused on a) the content/literacy coaches' reactions to their professional developing during the 2000-2001 school year and on their work supporting the implementation of guided reading and writers' workshop, and b) the cohort I and II whole-school change coaches' work developing school-based capacity for whole-school improvement. The report focused on the challenges coaches face in implementing their work. Since the section of the memo that focused on content/literacy coaches reflected the work and professional development of BPS as well as BPE coaches, we shared that section of the memo with the Deputy for Teaching and Learning, Tim Knowles. Education Matters' original intention was to further elaborate the June 2001 memo to the BPE to help inform their approach to coaching during the 2001-2002 school year. However, in light of the BPE's adoption of the Collaborative Coaching and Learning (CCL) model for the Effective Practice (EP) Schools, we did not think it worthwhile to further elaborate findings from a model of content/literacy coaching no longer in use.

According to Ellen Guiney, the BPE decided to develop a new model of coaching, the CCL model, because of three factors. First, the BPE learned from Education Matters' *Taking Stock* report (July 2000) and from its own school visits that the collaborative activities engendered by the ILT and LASW groups were effective in weakening schools' cultures of isolation. This finding supported the theory undergirding whole-school improvement in Boston. Second, the BPE knew that it needed to refine its approach to coaching so that it better fit into the coaching model defined for the district by Rachel Curtis' work. And third, the BPE knew that the one-day-week model of coaching was inefficient and often ineffective. Education Matters' evaluation reports as well as the BPE's on-site observations and discussions of coaching led them to develop the CCL as a way to better support the improvement of teaching and learning and better spend the funds allocated to coaching as well.

With the creation of the Coach Working Group (CWG), a collaboration of the BPS and BPE designed to consider the possible scale-up of the CCL model to a range of the district's schools – not only to those that have achieved EP status – Education Matters staff now think it would be useful to provide the BPS and BPE with a) a summary of what we learned from content/literacy, whole-school change, and math coaches in the 2000-2001 school year, and b) our judgment of

[1]Education Matters interviewed coaches about their work in elementary, K-8, and middle schools. We did this because the sample of schools included in our evaluation represent the K-8 grade span.

how those findings might inform the development of the CCL model in many more BPS schools. Education Matters researchers interviewed seven elementary and four secondary math coaches in the latter half of the 2000-2001 school year. We do not yet have longitudinal data on their role and work, however, the initial interviews revealed that they share many of the same challenges faced by content/literacy and whole-school change coaches. In doing this, however, we want to stress the importance of situating the discussion of the organization and content of coaching in the context of Boston's whole-school improvement design. Therefore, before turning to issues specifically related to coaching, and literacy coaching in particular, we briefly review the theory of action that is guiding the Essentials that underpin whole-school improvement in Boston.

Boston's Theory of Action. Boston's theory of action began with the straightforward hypothesis that improved instruction would improve student achievement. Then it postulated that the way to achieve improved instruction was to support teachers at their school sites as they learn in collaboration with one another. Collaborative learning has been facilitated by asking teachers and principals to engage in implementing the Essentials, which, when undertaken with skillful support, help to change the social structure and intellectual capital of each school. The activities associated with the Essentials help school staff a) recognize their own learning needs as well as those of their students, b) reorganize time, student groupings, staff allocations, and other resources, and c) direct their attention to the measurement of student progress. Finally, the theory asserts that schools cannot undertake this work by themselves. Rather, they need leadership within the school and external support because the work is complicated, a clear departure from their existing practice for many, difficult, and often threatening. One significant form of external support is provided by whole-school change, content/literacy, and, more recently, math coaches.

Education Matters' tested this theory of reform by examining the implementation of two key components of the Essentials, ILTs and LASW groups.[2] Our analysis revealed that the quality of implementation of these two structures and activities were highly associated with teachers' and principals' collegial work around instruction.[3] We found that schools with well-functioning ILTs and strong LASW groups were far more likely to be schools in which principals' and teachers' work was increasingly collegial, collaborative, and instructionally focused. Such schools, in turn, had established the capacity to take on additional components of reform, for example, implementation of performance-based assessments. They provided environments in which teacher leaders were developing more significant roles in supporting the improvement of teaching and learning. No school in our sample had a collegial, collaborative and instructionally focused culture without well-functioning ILT and LASW groups. And, no school had this

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[2] Neufeld, B and Woodworth, K. (July 2000) Taking Stock: The Status of Implementation and the Need for Further Support in the BPE-BAC Cohort I and II Schools. Education Matters, Inc. Cambridge, MA

[3] Work on these Essentials was in the context of schools having chosen a literacy instructional focus which involved teachers and principals in learning research-based "best practices" associated with literacy instruction.

culture without strong, instructionally oriented principal leadership.[4] We stress these findings because they are associated with the work of changing the school. They go beyond literacy instruction to the work of whole-school change as well as content/literacy coaches.

An Introductory Note. Given this context, we begin with a reminder. CCL is in a "pilot test" phase this school year in a set of schools that have demonstrated a) high levels of implementation of some of the Essentials of whole-school improvement, b) and strong principal leadership for instruction. These schools have in place conditions conducive to taking the step of testing a more collaborative, focused, and intense approach to coaching. The anecdotal feedback from the first few months of implementation is positive. But neither the BPE nor the BPS as yet have sufficient data on which to base a) expansion of the coaching model to schools that do not have in place the organizational, cultural and instructional components found in the EP schools, and/or b) expansion of the model to other content areas in EP schools. There is reason to think the model could be implemented effectively in a broader range of schools, and there is good reason to consider alternate models of coaching in light of the reasons the BPE developed the CCL model in the first place. But, there is also reason to think that implementation in a broader range of schools should be considered as additional pilot tests of the CCL model from which the BPS and BPE would learn. The data derived from a well-planned set of pilot tests could then inform a larger scale roll-out of the CCL model.

Organization of the Report. We begin our analysis with a review of the challenges that content/literacy, whole-school change, and math coaches encountered last year. Then, we examine the organization and focus of the CCL and the implications of this coaching model for addressing the challenges elaborated in the previous section of the report. Finally, we turn to a set of coaching and coaching-related issues that need to be addressed in designing a scale-up of the CCL model in literacy and in considering other aspects of coaching and its integral role in improving teaching and learning.

I. The Challenges of Coaching

Before we turn to the challenges facing coaches and their implications for scaling-up the CCL model, we want to point out that, despite the challenges that remain, coaching has come a long way since its inception in Boston during the 1997-1998 school year.

- Whole-school change coaches have supported the development and progress of a) ILTs, b) LASW groups, c) the allocation of resources, d) the school-wide examination of assessment data, and e) development of the Whole-School Improvement Plan (WSIP), for

[4]When the Effective Practice Schools were selected in the spring of 2001 based on the expert judgment of the cohort directors and their assistants, and the deputy superintendents, and on a review of coch reports about the schools, no schools in our sample with low-functioning ILTs and LASW groups were selected. And, all but one the schools in our sample that had high-functioning ILTs and LASW groups were selected as EP schools. We see this as an independent confirmation of the importance of these components of the Essentials to whole-school improvement and increases in student achievement.

example. They have had significant roles in helping principals focus on instruction and nurture the leadership of teachers within their schools. Their influence cuts across content areas and grade levels to bring whole-school focus into the work of improving teaching and learning. Education Matters' data lead us to conclude that whole-school change coaches are integral to the continuing development of the whole-school focus of Boston's reform agenda.

- Literacy/content coaches have, similarly, become integral to the work of improving instruction. They describe their work as more focused and report that, more often than in the past, they are able to directly assist teachers in their efforts to implement literacy strategies. While teacher resistance continues, coaches reported that more teachers were requesting their support than in the past. Some said that the coherent push from the district, the cohort directors and, in best cases, the principals, contributed heavily to their ability to implement their roles. By the end of the 2000-2001 school year, literacy/content coaching had become a "regular" part of the work of whole-school improvement in most of Boston's schools.

- And, during the 2000-2001 school year, we saw coaching in mathematics take its place among the array of professional development strategies designed to improve teaching and learning in the district. Both elementary and secondary schools began to work with math coaches to implement new curricula programs, develop new ways of teaching, and deepen teachers' content knowledge. Coaches helped establish Math Leadership Teams (MLTs) at the school level and supported the development of team members' leadership capacities. In addition, a number of math coaches led introductory and content-based workshops during the school year. Math coaches modeled lessons, observed teachers trying new practices, and provided feedback after observing.[5]

Even as coaches recognize the progress they and their schools have made, they remain troubled by challenges that stand in the way of their being even more effective. These challenges, which are often reflected across coaching roles, need to be addressed whether coaching continues in its traditional fashion or shifts into a CCL model. Our analysis reveals that these challenges are associated with 1) coaches' own knowledge and skill, 2) the time available for coaching, 3) setting priorities for the work, and, 4) working in settings in which there is weak and/or ineffective principal support and/or schools in which implementation of the ILTs and LASW groups is at a very low level.

1. Coach Knowledge and Skill. The coaches who have been hired to work in Boston's schools begin their work with a great deal of knowledge and skill. But, they would be the first to agree that they do not know all they need to know to fully implement their roles. Our data reveal that

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[5]Boston's reform of mathematics teaching and learning is organized differently at the elementary and secondary levels and coaches are assigned to schools in light of this organization. We do not attempt to describe the math plan in this report. We do want to include mathematics and its coaching component, however, in the discussion of the CCL model.

coaches have some common areas in which they would like to learn more, and some that are specific to their individual roles.

- ***Understanding the Big Picture.*** Education Matters has noted in other reports that both whole-school change and content/literacy coaches, especially those who were in their first or second year of coaching remarked that they did not fully understand the "big picture" of the reform agenda in Boston. As the reform has progressed and become more complex, newly hired whole-school change and content/literacy coaches have a particularly difficult time figuring out the history and purpose of the Essentials and their components. Similarly, many math coaches said the same thing last spring, reporting that they did not know, for example, what LASW was or what function the ILT served. As a result, they were unfamiliar with the whole-school improvement context into which the math reform is being placed.[6] In this situation, coaches lack a clear conception of the role, its responsibilities and how it is to be linked with other instructionally focused efforts in the schools. When coaches do not have sufficient knowledge of the "big picture" of the reform agenda, they report being unable to understand decisions made by the district and/or the BPE. Content/literacy and math coaches certainly understand the importance of their specific work. What they do not understand is how their content-focused work connects to the larger whole-school improvement effort. They are often unsure about how to work with other coaches to coordinate their efforts.

- ***Understanding the Content of the Curriculum.*** Although content/literacy and math coaches were hired because they have a good grasp of their content area, they often find themselves lacking in knowledge and skill with some specifics of the curriculum and/or pedagogy they are coaching. Some content/literacy coaches reported that they were not clear about the details of Guided Reading and Writers Workshop because of a) insufficient professional development, combined with b) the fact that, quite often, they were trying to support a literacy strategy that they themselves had never used. Coaches expressed greater uncertainty about how to implement Guided Reading in the upper elementary grades than in the primary grades, in particular. They reported that upper grade elementary teachers were being asked to use literacy strategies for which neither they nor the coaches had been trained. Coaches and teachers who tried to apply K-2 literacy strategies in the upper grades often found that the translation did not go well. Furthermore, as a small number of coaches pointed out, without knowing Guided Reading well, they could not help teachers who were already moderately competent with the strategies further improve their practice.

  Content/literacy coaches reported other challenges as a result of their own level of knowledge and skill. For example, they said they were not always clear about how Guided Reading might be similar and/or different than the specifics of reading instruction taught by the Literacy Collaborative. When teachers were confused by the two

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[6]Math coaches may be more knowledgeable this year, at least with respect to LASW. We know that math coaches are helping teachers look at their students' math work as part of their coaching role.

approaches, coaches report that they could not always be helpful. They reported that in some of their schools, literacy coordinators, particularly those trained by the Literacy Collaborative (LC), were more skillful with Guided Reading than they were. Even if they were familiar with the strategies because of prior work as Reading Recovery teachers, for example, coaches reported that knowing how to use a strategy in a one-on-one teaching situation with a student was not adequate preparation for helping teachers use it in a whole class setting.

Initial interviews with math coaches last spring revealed some of the same concerns. A number of the coaches with whom we spoke reported that they were only one step/unit ahead of their teachers in understanding the curriculum, a situation that made them uncomfortable. Those who had not previously taught math using either the Investigations or Connected Mathematics programs wished they had had more opportunities to use the curriculum materials prior to the start of the school year.

- ***Gaining Strategies for Coaching Teachers.*** All of the elementary and several of the secondary math coaches with whom we spoke last spring wanted additional training on how to coach teachers. They might want to know how to "push" teachers to the next level of implementation without alienating them, for example, or learn more about how to establish their credibility with teachers and principals. Content/literacy coaches specifically identified this as an area in which they needed additional support. Although some said that they thought their professional development focused sufficiently on the process of coaching teachers, many others said that the focus was too heavily weighted toward, for example, teaching Writers' Workshop to children rather than toward the process of coaching teachers to use the strategy/process.

- ***Dealing with Principals.*** Content/literacy coaches reported that they did not know how to influence principals who had little interest in or understanding of the literacy strategies. Nor did content/literacy coaches think that this should be a part of their job description. However, without adequate principal support, neither teachers nor coaches were able to move forward with implementing literacy "Best Practices."

- ***Confronting the Secondary Status of Math Reform.*** Many math coaches reported that although principals vary in the support/guidance they provide to math reform, most give it second-place status in their schools. Only one middle school principal was described as actively supporting the reform. Coaches would like to learn how to raise the status of mathematics reform given the primacy of literacy. How does the lack of support manifest itself? Elementary and secondary math coaches report that when they are not in the building, teachers may not use the new math curricula and pedagogy. Principals may not have devised schedules that enable teachers to have the longer time block needed for the math curricula. The insufficient time set aside for math challenges coaches as well as teachers. These examples and others suggest to coaches that principals are not supporting and monitoring implementation of the math reform.

- ***Gaining Strategies for Coaching ILTs.*** Many WSC coaches indicated that they wanted to know more about a) what a high-functioning ILT and a high functioning WSC coach look like, b) how to move the ILT from its current level of functioning to one higher, and, c) how to promote deep change in schools that had made only surface/veneer changes yet thought they had made deep changes. Whole-school change coaches also want to know how to go about changing "nice" relationships with principals into relationships that lead principals to make substantial improvements in their instructional leadership.

2. Time for Coaching. In previous reports, Education Matters has addressed the challenges that coaches face because a) they do not have enough time in each school, b) they are assigned to schools for one day/week, an assignment strategy that leads whole-school change coaches, for example, to have difficulty being at their schools for ILT and LASW group meetings if the groups at different schools meet on the same days, and, c) they lack the flexibility to schedule multiple, sequential days at schools. Other challenges arise when individuals coach on a part-time basis and have non-coaching obligations that limit their availability for school-based work and/or coach professional development. In interviews last spring, math coaches, too, said that limited time in schools contributed to the challenge of moving forward with improving teaching and learning.

- ***WSC coaches talk about the limited, even fragmented work they do in schools because they have too little time to do their work and are assigned to too many schools. Content/literacy and math coaches reported that they did not have enough time to adequately work with the teachers in their schools.*** This challenge was described most often by whole-school change and math coaches who noted that their schedules precluded any intensity or continuity in their work. These coaches said they could not readily establish themselves as a presence in the schools. Some whole-school and math coaches reported working at five different schools. They faced the challenge of establishing relationships with a great many teachers and principals. Finally, the one-day-week or less frequent involvement in schools led to situations in which some teachers were not available on the day the coach was in the school.

- ***Limited time in schools leads to challenges of scheduling in a context of little flexibility.*** As a result of their assignment to many schools, some whole-school change and math coaches described themselves as having formal schedules that afforded them little flexibility with their time. Coaches might want to work with the ILT and LASW groups in a school, but cannot because the meetings happen on different days. Or, two schools in their purview might have ILT meetings on the same day, requiring them to miss one school's meetings altogether or alternate attendance. Neither option meets the needs of the school or the coach.

- ***Both math and content/literacy coaches too often, could not find time during the day to de-brief with one or more teachers after a demonstration lesson, co-teaching experience or observation.*** This important coaching step was omitted, thereby weakening the impact of learning from observations and demonstrations.

- ***Content/Literacy coaches, in particular, reported that they were assigned to schools at a one-coach-to-a-school ratio regardless of the size of the school.*** The larger the school, the greater the number of teachers and the less time the coach had to work with each of them or even a significant number of them.

3. Setting Priorities in the Context of Limited Time. Given the constraints of time, coaches have tried to optimize the time they have in schools by setting priorities. Often, content/literacy coaches, in particular, report operating without clear guidelines for setting priorities and wonder whether they have made the right decisions.

- ***Coaches had to make hard choices about their own learning needs and those of the teachers.*** For example, if a content/literacy coach decided that it was essential to go to literacy training with the teachers, he/she might lose three or four days of coaching time, limiting further the time available to work directly with teachers on practice. On the other hand, without participating in the training, the coach felt inadequately prepared for the demands of the work.

- ***Coaches who worked in a targeted way with a few teachers for an extended period of time wondered whether they were making a large enough impact school-wide.*** They wondered how to balance the depth versus breadth issues of implementing the literacy strategies.

- ***Both math and content/literacy teachers wondered if it was worthwhile to spend their limited time with teachers who lacked effective behavior management strategies and, who were, as a result, unable to implement the instructional content and strategies.*** Coaches felt that time spent with such teachers was unproductive because it was not targeted to the teachers' needs. Although coaches might have the ability to coach teachers in behavior management strategies, they did not think they should spend their scarce time in this way. When many teachers in a school lacked behavior management skills, coaches noted that school wide literacy work could not move forward.

- ***A few coaches who worked with weak teachers – teachers who were not competent in the subject matter they were teaching – wondered whether this was a good use of their time.*** Most coaches in this position felt that they did not have sufficient time to devote to such teachers and that it was the principal's responsibility to work with them or find them other professional development supports.

4. Weak Instructional Leadership; Weak Organization and Instructional Infrastructure. In Education Matters' July 2000 report, we identified schools' limited capacity to take on the work of school improvement if they had weak principal leadership and had achieved only very

low levels of implementation of the Essentials.[7] Our interviews with coaches revealed that their work as external support agents was significantly influenced by schools' level of implementation of the Essentials.

- ***Coaches in schools that lacked a) principal focus and direction, b) teachers who had been trained in a literacy program, and, c) low implementation of the Essentials had a very difficult time organizing and focusing their work.*** They experienced considerable frustration throughout the year. In contrast, coaches in schools that had these attributes found themselves able to develop and articulate the goals of their work as well as a plan for its implementation.

- ***Content/literacy coaches who worked in schools that were at the early stages of implementing the Essentials (even if they were Cohort I schools) and had weak principal leadership of the reform did not have well-specified roles in the schools and reported that they were not sure that their work was having an impact on instruction.*** Unlike their counterparts in schools with strong principal leadership, such coaches had to repeatedly negotiate access to teachers and a focus for their work. Coaches in our sample who worked in multiple schools that varied considerably from one another in principal leadership, were most able to describe the impact that principal leadership had on the focus of their work. Without exception, they described greater frustration in the schools with weak leadership for reform.

- ***WSC coaches report that they have little opportunity to increase principals' and teachers' capacity to implement the Essentials in schools that do not yet have high or moderate functioning principal leadership and well-functioning ILTs and LASW groups.*** This is due to the fact that a) the existing school-based capacity is insufficient for the work that needs to be done, and/or b) there is no manifested principal or teacher "will" to do the work. Coaches who work in such school contexts describe their role as "frustrating and disempowering." They perceive central office as ineffective in making clear that principals must assert leadership for reform at the schools. They grow cynical about the district's commitment to reform when they see such schools receive high IDR scores and satisfactory principal evaluations.

- ***WSC coaches find it extremely challenging to overcome teacher resistance to reform work in schools with weak principal leadership.*** For example, some teachers still demonstrate a great deal of resistance to LASW and, consequently, this form of professional development remains no more than group scoring of student work with little attention to the next steps/implications for teaching. Among teachers who are so resistant, no one is likely to have been trained to facilitate the LASW sessions. Coaches in such schools find themselves unable to make any headway in developing teachers'

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[7]One school in our sample had a large cadre of teachers who resisted the principal's efforts to engage them in the work of whole-school improvement. In this school, teachers as well as the principal were involved in keeping the school from moving forward.

capacity to establish, let alone sustain, the work of whole-school improvement.

- ***Coaches do not know how to change a school's prevailing culture when weak principal leadership has not fostered the collaborative, collegial, professional culture necessary for Boston's approach to school improvement.*** ILTs in such schools do not function sufficiently to analyze, for example, school wide formative assessment data. Additionally, coaches report that there is little peer support among teachers for the development of teacher leadership. In these schools, it is difficult for coaches to support the development of teacher leadership as teachers cling to the norm that all teachers have equivalent skill and should, therefore, have the same status. Teachers who have the knowledge and skill to take on such roles, indeed those who already have them by dint of their designation as "literacy specialist" for example, may be reluctant to step forward and implement their roles.

Summary: The Challenges of Coaching. We want to reiterate that the challenges that coaches report have arisen because of the serious efforts of the BPS and BPE to establish coaching as one strong component of a concerted, whole-school focused effort to improve teaching and learning in the district's schools. The challenges have arisen in a context in which coaches' work has already led to significant, positive changes in many of the district's schools. Nonetheless, the challenges raise serious issues for the BPS and BPE. Unless they are addressed with effective policies and practices, they may slow the further progress of schools that have already made progress and they may leave "as is" schools that have as yet made little progress.

As we noted some of the challenges result from conditions in the schools – weak principals and/or principals who are not committed to implementing the Essentials and/or resistant teachers – for example. Some challenges arise from gaps in coaches' knowledge and skill and the difficulty, to date, that both the BPS and BPE have faced in designing coach professional development that meets all coaches' needs.[8] Still others arise from the resources available for coaching and the ways in which both the BPS and BPE decided to allocate these resources, decisions that resulted in assigning coaches to schools for a number of days per week. While this may have been a sensible strategy early in the reform process, experience with this model has generated knowledge about both its strengths and weaknesses and led to the development of the CCL model for literacy coaching in the EP schools this year.

We turn, therefore, to a discussion of the CCL model and consider how it may ameliorate some of the coaching challenges while further advancing Boston's whole-school improvement agenda. Then we focus on some school-based conditions that will not likely be solved by the CCL model and some coach professional development challenges may need to be met in order to insure success with CCL and/or other coaching models. Finally, we offer a set of questions for the BPS and BPE to consider as it moves forward with considering the scale-up of the CCL model for the

[8]We are referring to professional development available to content/literacy and whole-school change coaches in making this point. We have not yet sufficiently studied math coach professional development to be able to speak to the extent to which it meets coaches' needs.

2002-2003 school year and beyond.

II. CCL: Implications for Wider Use.

Before discussing the implications for wider use of the CCL model in light of what we have learned about the challenges of this work, we want to remind readers of the key components of the CCL model as described in materials provided by the BPE.

A Few Words About CCL. First, the model affirms the importance of the whole-school orientation of improvement in Boston. Boston's theory of action is not based upon the successful implementation of a series of curriculum focused reforms, for example, first literacy, then math, and so on. Rather, the theory is based on implementation of a set of Essentials that relate to the entire school. Because of this, the change coach remains fundamental to successful implementation of the CCL model. As the BPE document states, "CCL will be used in Effective Practice schools by both content and change coaches to build teacher leadership to deepen and sustain instructional improvement." This is because "school-based teacher leadership is key" to success in Boston. According to the CCL document, change coaches will focus on ILT development and facilitation as well as LASW facilitation in order to support the growth of teacher capacity and leadership.

Second, we reiterate that Boston's theory of action is based on the premise that the way to achieve improved instruction is to support teachers at their school sites as they learn in collaboration with one another. The CCL model reflects this. As the BPE states in its description of the CCL model, "The aim of Collaborative Teaching and Learning (CCL) is just that – to reduce isolation and to encourage a culture in which teachers visit each other's classrooms to observe, participate in, and share best practices." For the current school year, in line with two of the superintendent's priorities, the CCL model will support schools "as staff deepen their knowledge and use of Readers' Workshop and Writers' Workshop." CCL, described as the central component of EP schools professional development plan, includes the following components that stress the importance of collaborative learning:

- demonstration in the host classroom
- reading of professional literature
- engagement with colleagues in inquiry groups
- use of observation, practice, and reflection to improve instruction. (BPE document on CCL, SY2001-2002)

Third, in order to complete a CCL cycle, each school's content/literacy coach must, in collaboration with the principal and ILT, organize the CCL cycle and support its implementation and follow-through. For its success, the CCL model depends on the active participation of teachers and principals, on the development of teacher leadership and whole-school capacity for continuous instructional improvement. In its present form, the model requires a school to have already developed a great deal of capacity that can support more complex forms of coaching and teacher learning.

What Are the Coaching Challenges that CCL Could Remedy? If we think specifically about content/literacy coaching, the CCL model has a number of features that would reduce challenges that arise from the current coaching model.

- ***CCL will enable content/literacy coaches to have access to far more teachers than in past years.*** The potential for whole-school involvement in the improvement of literacy-related teaching and learning will likely increase considerably with the implementation of the CCL model.

- ***CCL includes built-in time for content/literacy coaches to plan with and debrief with teachers.*** Content/Literacy coaches have been frustrated by the lack of time available for these important activities.

- ***The CCL model enables coaches to work with sets of teachers for extended periods of time with the goal of reaching all teachers by working with them in collaborative groups.*** In the past, content/literacy coaches have had to make hard choices about how to allocate the time they had with the teachers in each school.

- ***CCL has the potential to reduce, perhaps eliminate, problems associated with teacher resistance.***[9] Anecdotal evidence suggests that CCL reduces teacher resistance to working with coaches due, most likely, to the collaborative aspect of the design which enforces the expectation that every teacher will be involved.

- ***CCL shifts the locus of responsibility for learning to the teachers themselves by engaging them in developing the focus of their learning-site work.*** As such, it will contribute to the creation of school-based, collaborative learning cultures that focus on instruction.

- ***The CCL helps teachers "see" and gain direct experience with what may be unfamiliar literacy strategies in collaboration with their peers.*** As such, teachers have access to live exemplars of the kinds of pedagogy they should try in their classrooms.

Thus, the CCL model has the potential to ameliorate challenges that result from the organization of and time available for content/literacy coaches. It enables coaches and teachers to establish clear priorities and goals. It may minimize teachers' ability to resist working with their content/literacy coaches. In addition, the CCL model has virtues of its own that are not directly associated with the challenges of the extant BPS coaching model. It engages teachers in the collaborative pursuit of improved teaching and learning with one another and with the expertise provided by an external coach. It is an important next step in developing the collaborative, instructionally focused school culture that is at the heart of whole-school improvement in

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[9]We are not sure whether teachers are raising issues associated with their negotiated agreement that might have an impact on participation in the CCL model. If so, implementing the CCL model may require involvement with the BTU.

Boston. And, as a next step, it is appropriately being pilot-tested in schools that have already taken the prior steps, in schools that have established well-functioning ILTs and LASW groups and have strong principal leadership for instruction. All of this speaks for the potential of this coaching model to improve content/literacy coaching.

But, understandably the CCL model does not have the capacity to deal with all of the challenges that coaches raised, nor can it be the sole solution to the challenges that continue to face the schools, the BPS, and BPE as they work to intensify and accelerate whole-school improvement. For example, a coaching model cannot solve the challenges posed by a weak or resistant principal. We are not sure whether it cannot adequately address the needs of teachers who have weak content knowledge and/or classroom management skills. The BPS and BPE will still need to provide coaches with the knowledge and skill they need to implement this promising coaching model.

In considering the possibilities for scaling-up CCL, then, the BPS and BPE need to assess whether, to what extent, and in what ways the CCL model, as a next step in whole-school improvement, could be successful in schools that have not yet completed the earlier steps of implementing the Essentials, in schools that do not have in place the conditions found in the EP schools. Education Matters' work studying the CCL this year, along with the inquiries that the BPE and BPS will make, should add to the knowledge base informing the scale-up efforts. At the present time, however, one way to begin such an assessment might be to elaborate the range of conditions/levels of implementation currently found in Boston's schools and play out the implications of attempting literacy focused CCL in each of these contexts. For example, one might ponder the prospects of implementation where:[10]

- ***The school has good principal leadership and willing teachers but is at an early phase of implementing the Essentials.*** Might such a school be a promising site for CCL if, for example, the school were given some additional whole-school change coach support with which to increase the capacity of the ILT?

- ***The principal and teachers are compliance oriented, do what they are told, but have not yet taken ownership of the work.*** Schools with these conditions might be good bets for CCL. After all, early implementation of the CCL model in the EP schools suggests that the model enhances teacher ownership of their professional development work.

- ***The school has many teachers who have not been trained in a literacy model or balanced literacy approach.*** Most likely, teachers in these schools would need intensive professional development in balanced literacy before they had the baseline knowledge

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[10]Education Matters offers these suggestions about the likelihood of successfully implementing the CCL model into schools with a range of characteristics to demonstrate the process. We do not intend our examples to be inclusive with respect to the kinds of situations that will be found in the schools nor the final word about whether or not to try a scale-up in any of these types of schools.

and skill likely to be needed when implementing the CCL model. Such schools may not be ready for the CCL model. On the other hand, in some schools, under some circumstances, the CCL model may be able to support teachers in learning the basics of a balanced literacy approach.

- ***The principal is weak but eager to learn and work hard to implement the Essentials.*** Data from Education Matters' *Taking Stock* report (July 2000) would lead us to conclude that the district would be advised to help strengthen such principals' knowledge and skill prior to attempting implementation of the CCL model. Early feedback from the EP schools suggests that this model makes great demands on the principal, demands that might be inappropriate for a weak principal who has a great deal to learn.

- ***The principal is weakly committed to implementing the Essentials; only some teachers have been trained in the balanced literacy approach; ILTs and LASW groups meet sporadically; test scores, measured by school average are deemed "good enough", and yet the school has gotten positive feedback on the little progress it has made.*** Although a school with these conditions might seem a bad bet for implementing the CCL model, it might be worth considering what kind of support, monitoring and accountability could be put in place if one were to attempt to use CCL as a strategy for "jump-starting" reform in a school that has resisted all efforts made during the last four or five years. Might CCL, with significant additional supports, which include a highly skilled WSC coach, provide a focus, for example, for developing the ILT and teacher collaboration in ways envisioned by the use of LASW?

- ***The principal is competent but has a significant segment of the faculty that strongly resists implementing the Essentials.*** We imagine that the district would need to understand the resistance of such teachers. Are their teaching strategies currently leading to increasing achievement for all of their students? If the answer is "yes,' then the district may have something to learn from them about alternate ways of improving student learning. If the answer is "no," then the district needs to support the principal in insisting that teachers implement the Readers'/Writers' workshop model. In addition, were the CCL model chosen as a strategy for engaging teachers in this work, considerable additional support might be needed for the coach who would be working in a difficult situation.

- ***The principal, despite being strong and/or knowledgeable, and teachers are in frequent conflict with each other and, as a result, have weakly implemented the Essentials.*** We include this situation because we have come across it in our evaluation work. In our view, schools in which adult relations are dysfunctional would not be places in which to put the CCL model because they are not schools in which the principal and teachers can work together. However, we would suggest that the district develop strategies for dealing with such schools so that they are capable of moving forward with whole-school improvement.

This list is not exhaustive; we present it to suggest how the BPS and BPE might go about determining the conditions likely to prove requisite for implementing the CCL model in literacy. Such an analysis would also help the district determine school-based problems for which CCL is not the solution and for which the district must develop other intervention strategies. We think that undertaking such an analysis would lead to clearer thinking about which schools could benefit from access to the CCL model and which schools might benefit from a different set of supports and/or interventions which might include but not be limited to the design of its coaching model.

In undertaking this analysis, it will be reasonable to ask: Does it make sense to use the CCL model as a strategy for coaching in math? Although Education Matters does not have sufficient data with which to answer this question, we offer some thoughts on issues the district might consider in coming up with an answer.[11]

First, most teachers and schools are early in the process of learning math content and pedagogy. A large number of schools received the curricula materials for the first time this year and not all teachers are using the full set of materials. It is likely that many teachers would not feel quite ready to work in a lab setting, in front of their peers, when they have never used the materials with their students. We suggested that the CCL model might not work well with teachers who are not yet trained in the Readers'/Writers' workshop strategies. For the same reasons, we think it possible that teachers in the early stages of learning the content and instructional approach of math reform might not be in a position to benefit from the CCL model.

Second, the CCL model, as it is designed for literacy, depends on teachers having the knowledge and skill necessary to sustaining their work when the coach is not in the school for a cycle or two, a period of at least six weeks. Given the early implementation stage of math reform, it is unlikely that most schools, other than learning sites, have the teacher leadership/capacity to sustain ongoing work without the support of a coach.

Third, as currently designed, the math coaches fulfill many roles. For example, in addition to in-class coaching activities, a) math coaches are responsible for teacher and principal professional development, b) they facilitate the Math Leadership Teams in an effort to develop teacher leadership that can support their peer's implementation of the new curricula and pedagogy, and c) they attend LASW sessions where students' math work is the focus of attention.

Fourth, CCL will present scheduling challenges at both the secondary and elementary levels that need to be taken into account in formulating new approaches to coaching. Even if the schedules can be designed, at the elementary level it will be important to

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[11]We think the question of using the CCL model in math raises important issues related to the district's math plan and related to the demand it would place on elementary school teachers, in particular. Needless to say, the Directors of the Elementary and Secondary Math reform plans must lend their voices to this discussion.

consider whether it is reasonable for teachers to be involved in CCL in two content areas.

Fifth, the leaders of Boston's math reform designed the reform with knowledge of "best practices" research in mathematics. In considering a change in coaching models, it will be important to consider what is pertinent to the reform of mathematics instruction that might be quite different to what is pertinent in the area of literacy and to connect those features of math coaching and professional development to the structure and process of the CCL to see where there is a good match and where another approach to coaching might be more productive.

It may be that there are ways in which to use the CCL model, or a variant of it, in implementing the math plan. Education Matters' suggestion is that discussions of the possibility of using the model be carefully considered with those who understand the needs of mathematics teachers and in the context of implementing the Essentials of whole-school improvement.

In concluding the discussion of the potential wider use of the CCL model, we return to some of the reasons that led to its development. BPE was concerned that coach resources were not being well-used. The challenges Education Matters has described were well- known to the BPE and the CCL was designed to address them. In particular, the CCL model a) requires coaches, teachers and principals to plan their work at the outset, b) provide a protocol for establishing the work and its priorities, and c) develops a year-long plan of coaching that is designed to reach all teachers. Whether the CCL model is the "right" coaching model for all schools and/or for all content areas, the model can draw the CWG's discussions to the model's features so that they can be examined and carefully considered by the group as it designs the next phases of coaching in Boston

With this analysis in mind, we turn now to a brief review of significant issues and challenges associated with coaching that must be addressed so that coaching, whether using the CCL or other models becomes an evermore powerful school-improvement strategy in all of Boston's schools.

III. Keeping the Focus on Coaching, Whole-School Improvement and the Essentials. In concluding this report, we revisit some of the significant challenges facing coaches, the BPS and the BPE as they work together to enhance whole-school improvement in the Boston Public Schools.

1. Professional Development Needs of Content/Literacy Coaches. During the 2000-2001 school year, the BPE-BAC joined with the BPS to provide cross-cohort literacy professional development so that all coaches had access to the same instruction on literacy strategies that language arts/English teachers were expected to implement. A few coachès, particularly those who were new to the literacy strategies, reported that the content of the sessions was appropriate and directly pertinent to their work. Far more coaches reported that the content of the professional development did not help them a) advance their own knowledge of Writers' Workshop or b) was not directly relevant to the work they were doing at their schools. For example:

- A number of coaches had participated in intensive Writers' Workshop professional development during the summer of 2000 with the same trainers who provided the school year professional development. Others reported having gained expertise through prior consulting/teaching work. As a result, they found the school year training redundant and not a good use of their time.[12] They would have liked a differentiated coach professional development program that would have enabled them to advance their knowledge and skill. A number of coaches, for example, wanted to see Writers' Workshop and Guided Reading/Readers' Workshop in operation at a high level so they would know what kind of classroom practice they were aiming to achieve.

- Many coaches reported that the professional development was not well-synchronized with their school-based needs. It might be necessary for them to train teachers in "mini-lessons" in Writers' Workshop in October, for example, but this topic was not covered in the professional development until December or January. Further, coaches reported that some topics were not covered sufficiently to enable them to teach the strategies to teachers.

- Coaches reported that their monthly professional development sessions had not prepared them to help teachers implement Guided Reading. Those coaches working with upper grade literacy programs were most concerned about the lack of professional development focused on Guided Reading. The middle school coaches with whom we spoke reported that the professional development was too heavily oriented to elementary schools. They wanted professional development that focused explicitly on grades six through eight.

- Coaches varied in the extent to which they thought that the professional development focused sufficiently on the process of coaching teachers. Some thought the focus was

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[12]Some of these coaches reported that the quality of the training was good. Their complaint was that it did not help them further develop their expertise.

sufficient; others said that the focus was too heavily weighted toward teaching Writers' Workshop to children rather than coaching teachers to use the strategy. Several coaches who desired an increased focus on coaching teachers suggested it would be beneficial if coaches could shadow/peer observe one another doing content/literacy coaching in classrooms.

The issues associated with content/quality/frequency and format of coach professional development need to be addressed as do new issues of coach professional knowledge and skill that will arise in the context of scaling-up implementation of the CCL model. The BPS and BPE, for example, will need to insure that coaches are reasonably skilled in the areas teachers choose for their inquiry groups during a CCL cycle as well as in the skills needed to support and/or adapt the cycles for different school settings. It may be necessary to design a system where coaches can get professional development "on demand" to assist them with their CCL work.

In light of these findings, it may be useful for the BPS and the BPE to develop and implement together a strong plan for providing differentiated professional development to content/literacy coaches. With respect to the CCL model, the BPE is in a strong position to identify the kinds of new knowledge and skill required by content/literacy coaches. In this context, we think it would also be useful for BPS and BPE to develop collaboratively a valid way of assessing coaches' knowledge and skill and a strategy for designing "next steps" in their individual professional development.

2. The Role and Work of the WSC Coach in the Context of EP Schools, Non-EP Schools and Implementation of All Content-Focused Coaching. Last school year, whole-school change coaches talked about being isolated in their schools even though their role focused on the whole school.[13] Most talked about having few links with content/literacy coaches; virtually all of the WSC coaches in our sample had scant if any involvement with math coaches. And, WSC coaches reported having few interactions with teachers and teacher leaders. As a result, they felt their work was becoming marginal at a time when the complexity of the whole-school improvement reform was increasing the need for careful attention to the whole school. Coaches' reports of their situations confirm Education Matters' findings from school-based research during the last school year. Recent interviews with WSC coaches this winter suggest that those working in EP schools are concerned about their minimal role with respect to implementation of the lab-sites associated with the CCL cycles. They are also concerned about the wisdom of continuing to be responsible for LASW when that work should be part of the CCL model, tied to the literacy work going on in the schools.

In our view, WSC coaches remain a key resource to implementing the Essentials. Therefore, we think it is timely for the BPS and BPE to assess the current design, expectations and functioning

[13]They reported being most isolated in the lowest implementing schools.

of the WSC coaches in order to develop, as needed, new expectations and roles for them. With this in mind, we raise several questions about the WSC coach role.

What alternatives to the current models of WSC coaching might be available for the district and BPE to try? Are there targeted coaching models, akin to CCL for literacy, that might create focus and intensity on a particular aspect of the Essentials, chosen by the ILT, perhaps, in an inquiry-like process?

Might WSC coaches meet regularly with schools' deputies, instructional leaders, coaches, specialists, and principals to figure out, in particular, how to work in concert with schools that are floundering? It is in such schools that coaches describe themselves as most isolated.

Should the WSC coach continue to be responsible for LASW in schools that are implementing the CCL model? In schools with other coaching models? In all academic disciplines? From an instructional perspective, it may be unwise to separate LASW from the CCL cycles (or from the design of math professional development and its coaching components). Furthermore, as teachers become more sophisticated in their knowledge and skill with literacy and math, WSC coaches may no longer have the content matter expertise with which to facilitate LASW groups. They may know how to help a teacher learn facilitation skills, but they may not know whether the content-related suggestions of the facilitator or teachers make sense in light of the curriculum.[14]

What are the resources from which WSC coaches can learn more about increasing the capacities of their schools' ILTs? WSC coaches want to know more about what high-functioning ILTs look like and how to increase an ILT's levels of functioning. They want to know how to promote deep change in schools that have made only surface changes. WSC coaches, like their content/literacy coach and math counterparts, have identified areas in which they want to grow. To date, they report that their professional development opportunities have not been sufficient to allow them to do so.

*3. **Assigning Coaches to Schools.*** In the context of considering changes in the organization and focus of coaching in the district, it may be timely to also consider the basis on which coaches are assigned to schools. More specifically, we think it would be advantageous for the BPS and BPE to develop strategies for assigning coaches to schools on the basis of coach expertise matched with specific school need. While we understand that it is difficult enough to identify sufficient

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[14]WSC coaches have indicated that their knowledge of literacy curricula and pedagogy is sometimes a problem even in schools that are not EP. For example, in schools where teachers have little knowledge of literacy themselves, coaches may not have enough literacy knowledge to help them gain more during LASW sessions. Since LASW is content-based professional development, WSC coaches worry that they are not sufficiently helpful to their schools when implementing this component of their work.

numbers of qualified coaches and that schools often begin the year without their coaches in place, we nonetheless think it would be valuable for those who lead the coach efforts to take stock of their coaches' expertise and use that knowledge in making assignments. For example, it may be that some coaches are better at helping teachers implement the early phase of Guided Reading while others are more effective in working with teachers who are advanced with implementation of Guided Reading. Some coaches might have a knack for working with teachers who think they are implementing the strategies, but are not. A careful analysis of coach strengths and school/teacher needs could lead to the development of additional and different strategies for allocating coaches to schools [even within a CCL model]. Finally, we are aware that new coaches often find themselves assigned to low-implementing schools, schools that may have had a high rate of coach turnover. Many coaches reported that they floundered in such circumstances. If new coaches need to be assigned to low-implementing schools, the BPS and BPE should develop specific strategies for introducing the new coaches into those schools and supporting them during the year.

4. Develop a strong, focused, coherent, on-going professional orientation program for new content/literacy, math, and whole-school change coaches. Repeat this program for coaches who are assigned after the start of the school year. Coaches need to begin their work with a clear understanding of the whole-school improvement approach in Boston, their role, and the specific knowledge and skill they will apply to the schools in which they will work. They need to know how their each coach role connects to the others and to the roles of deputies, instructional leaders, principals, and teacher leaders, for example. And, coaches need to know about the expectations each role can legitimately hold for itself and for the others. Coaches need to know about the history and development of the Essentials and understand the philosophy that underpins them as well as the components that accompany their implementation. In thinking about coach orientation, it might be worthwhile to consider assigning individual coach mentors for new coaches to insure that someone more knowledgeable and experienced in the district is available throughout the first year to support the new coaches' development.

5. Set Coaching Priorities. We understand that there are resource issues to consider in deciding whether and how to scale-up CCL. It may be that, after careful consideration, the BPS and BPE decide that the schools lowest in implementation are not yet ready to make good use of the CCL model. If that becomes the case, we think it behooves the BPS and BPE to develop strong alternatives to the CCL and try them in the lowest implementing, least well-led schools. It is clear that the policies and practices of the last few years have not been effective in these schools, and that without substantial efforts, these schools will likely continue to pose great challenges to the BPS. In its *Taking Stock* report, Education Matters concluded that all of the schools in the lowest implementing category were not there for the same reasons. We suggested that the district study those schools to determine what was standing in the way of their implementing the Essentials and then make considered judgements, based on the assessments, about what strategies to try next. We still recommend this approach. And, to the extent that coaching is a part of the approach to whole-school improvement, we suggest making sure that the most competent coaches, whatever the coaching structure, be allocated to these schools.

6. Collect Data That Will Shed Light on the Impact of Coaching. As far as we know Boston is one of a handful of urban districts that is investing heavily in coaching as a strategy for improving teaching and learning. In doing so, the BPS and BPE are in the forefront of developing knowledge about this important, school-based approach to professional development. In an effort to understand coaching and its impact in the Boston context, as well as to contribute more broadly to the knowledge about coaching as a professional development strategy, we suggest that the BPS and BPE collect data in order to determine a) whether, to what extent and under what circumstances the coaching practices are having the desired impact on teaching, and b) whether some models of coaching are more beneficial than others depending on, for example, academic content and/or schools' level of implementation of the Essentials. Such data collection and analysis would enable the BPS and BPE to understand and, where necessary, strengthen coaching. The process might contribute to the development of something like a "coaching best practices" resource library that would be available to coaches across the district. It would also provide documentation about the impact of this approach and garner support for further funding.

IV. Conclusion

The formation of the Coach Working Group provides the BPS and the BPE with the opportunity to think through the development and implementation of coaching strategies in the district. The advent of the CCL model in the EP schools is already providing data about the value of a coaching model that encourages teachers to learn content and pedagogy in a collegial, collaborative organization with support from an expert coach. As the CWG moves forward with its work, it will, no doubt, need to consider the human as well as financial resources available for coaching. As part of that consideration, we think the BPS and BPE would do well to detail what will be required at the leadership level to support the work. For example: Who will train and supervise the CCL coaches? What infrastructure does the district need to support this roll-out? How much of it is in place? What needs to be developed? How much of that infrastructure can be developed for what scale roll-out in the 2002-2003 school year? The CWG might also ask itself: Does CCL have to be the same in all of the schools? Does it have to be school-wide? Do the cycles have to be the same length of time in all schools?

Finally, we return to a theme Education Matters has discussed in many previous reports: Coaches cannot work effectively in schools that have weak principal leadership. And, teachers rarely improve their instructional practices significantly in schools with weak principal leadership. Coaching has not been the solution to the challenges of weak principal leadership that stand in the way of improving teaching and learning in Boston's schools. Thus, although we recognize that the CWG is appropriately focused on the coaching aspect of implementing the Essentials, we offer the reminder that another set of strategies likely needs to be put in place to insure that schools have the kinds of principal leadership that will enable them to become high functioning schools with all of the characteristics necessary for high student achievement.

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